A MATTER OF SUBSTANCE: At-a-Glance

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A PUBLICATION OF THE IDPH DIVISION OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

DIVISION QUICK FACTS

Director's Corner: We use the *A Matter of Substance* newsletter to communicate with you about a wide range of health issues, with a frequent focus on substance use disorders and prevention, treatment and recovery support services. This month we are devoting the entire newsletter to the issue of synthetic drugs, specifically synthetic cannabinoids, because we believe these substances pose a significant threat to lowa teens. To bring you the most up-to-date information on the subject, we consulted with our colleagues in the Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP). You may recall that we also worked with ODCP staff when we first presented information on this topic in our July 2010 newsletter, following the death of an lowa teen in June of that year. I hope the information that follows is useful to you. *Please see page 2 for links to other helpful resources.* Thanks, Kathy Stone

SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS FACTS:

What is a Synthetic Cannabinoid? Synthetic cannabinoids often contain a mixture of dried leaves from traditional herbs and other plant materials that are enhanced with an active synthetic cannabinoid ingredient that mimics the hallucinogenic effects of marijuana. They are also known as K2, Spice, or Herbal Incense.

What do Synthetic Cannabinoid products look like? The dried plant materials in synthetic cannabinoid products are typically green, brown, blonde and red. The products are commonly packaged in resealable foil packets, approximately 2x3 inches. The products are often labeled as "Natural Herbal Incense" with warnings stating they "are not for human consumption." Products can also be found labeled as potpourri. Packages usually do not mention synthetic cannabinoids as ingredients.

What are the effects of using Synthetic Cannabinoid products? The effects of these products mimic the hallucinogenic effects of marijuana. Known adverse effects include: panic attacks, agitation, tachycardia (rapid heard beat), elevated blood pressure, anxiety, numbness, tingling, severe vomiting, intense hallucinations and possible seizures. The effects usually last between 30 minutes and 2 hours. Some scientific reports state that synthetic cannabinoids are between 3 and 100 times more potent than delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the chemical compound in marijuana.

Is there any current legislation banning the possession or use of Synthetic Cannabinoid products? In January 2011, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) temporarily placed five synthetic cannabinoids into Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act. Congress is currently working to ban many more at the federal level. In lowa, under a state law enacted last year, six synthetic cannabinoid compounds are explicitly banned. Iowa Senate Study Bill 3104, patterned after a congressional proposal already passed by the U.S. House, would expand the number and types of synthetic cannabinoids banned by current state law—lowa Code 124.201 (4)—to cover many more. The legislative proposal would also allow the Board of Pharmacy to temporarily schedule, on an emergency basis, emerging synthetic cannabinoids or cathinones and other substances that pose an imminent hazard.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Emerging Drug Trends K2/Spice, Bath Salts and Salvia February 24, Des Moines. For more information and to register, contact Todd Roberts at todd.roberts@iowa.gov.

An Introduction to Cultural Competency for Substance Abuse Professionals: Developing Equitable Policies and Protocols Webinar March 1, 10:00-11:30. For more information, go to www.trainingresources.org

Iowa Drug Endangered Children Conference March 26, Altoona. For more information, go to www.iowadec.net

Governor's Conference on Substance Abuse April 3-4, Des Moines. For more information, go to www.trainingresources.org

Governor's Conference on Public Health April 17-18, Ames. For more information, go to www.iowapha.org

For more information, visit these links:

Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy

<u>Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center</u>

K2 Drug Facts

National Institute on Drug Abuse

